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9 ways to stand out at your company

Marketing Intelligence / Joanna L. Krotz



To get ahead in business, you must marry perception to reality. That is, you need to combine superior performance with savvy self-promotion.

Whenever you jump high hurdles and achieve bang-up results, it'd be swell if the right people sat up and took notice. But that's naïve thinking. Doing a great job and waiting for recognition won't work. You must also market yourself and let the boss know how you stand out.

Typically, bosses, boards and powers-that-be are way too busy to focus on you, even if you really are a star performer. Leaders spend time on what needs fixing, not what works.

If you're doing a fabulous job day in and day out, it's a safe bet that the chief scarcely knows the half of it. It's up to you to package and telegraph your special successes in order to get the nod or the corner office.

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You must, however, communicate your wins in ways that demonstrate how much you support the enterprise, not your own ego. Part of proving you can manage a company is by showing the boss that you can manage your career, points out Gene Fairbrother, a business coach for the National Association for the Self-Employed.

Being self-motivated

All that's easier said than done, especially done well. Even the most ambitious, most accomplished professional finds it awkward to toot his or her own horn. It feels unseemly. Plus, it's easy to cross the line. Too much tooting and it turns into grandstanding and braggadocio.

Too self-effacing and it's needy. Too frequent and it's obnoxious. You become the problem, not a solution.

To create the aura of a confident comer, consider this self-marketing business as a means to greater visibility, not a peacock drill in self-congratulation. It requires a deft balance of success, story telling and self-promotion. Here are nine ways to stand out in the crowd of wannabes:

1. **Be your own hero.** Your first fan should be yourself. You want to heighten awareness about your contributions among peers, supervisors, clients and within your industry. "We always believe that someone out there is smarter or more accomplished than we are," says Bill Getch, managing director at Professional Services PR in Alpharetta, Ga. "That may be true, but you don't get points-or business-for modesty." The route to advancement is to fully invest in your own expertise — because if you don't believe in yourself, no one else will, either.
2. **Take charge.** "Assume responsibilities outside your jurisdiction," suggests Florence Stone, author of "The Essential New Manager's Kit." Requesting such work sends a signal that you think "big picture," Stone says. Coming up with improved, cost-effective ways to handle old problems can't hurt either. Volunteer for jobs, committees, projects that no one else is willing

to do.

3. **Polish an industry image.** The idea is that if you speak, look and act the part, you'll ultimately take center stage. Such recognition takes time and effort so choose activities you can enjoy. There are lots of options. "Give tele-seminars or Webinars," advises Raleigh Pinsky, author of "101 Ways to Promote Yourself." She also suggests:
 - o Speak at colleges, associations or organizations in your local market.
 - o Write articles for trade journals in your field.
 - o Write a special report or white paper on core issues of your industry. This can be mailed to clients or peers or posted on a Web site.
 - o Create a mentoring group or program.
 - o Develop and distribute a "Leadership" newsletter.

Whatever it is, make sure the boss gets to hear all about it and the results you achieve. Also, make sure you're always well groomed and buffed, whatever the venue. And, yes, be sure you give all the glory to your company.

4. **Be the glue.** Lone rangers may attract press, but team leaders run companies. Managers want subordinates who can guide, motivate and get results from an interlocking network of people, technology and projects. Team-management skills are critical.

"If you want to get ahead, you need to demonstrate the ability to understand how your work relates to the work of others around you," says Albert A. Vicere, professor at Smeal College of Business at Penn State University. This isn't about politics, he explains. "I'm talking about showing that you know who to go to for help, advice, resources and support."

5. **Speak up and take credit.** Learn how to speak up at meetings and hold the center in a group. "Make sure you're recognized for your contributions," advises Annette Richmond, a communications coach in Rowayton, Conn. When someone takes ownership of your idea, she suggests you quickly reclaim it. "Say something like, 'I'm glad you agree that we need a new project leader next time. I was thinking of So-and-So. Who were you thinking of?'"
6. **But share just desserts.** Part of being a star is the ability to recognize your supporting cast. "If you fail to share the credit for successes, the notes you blow on your horn will sound sour," says Don Gabor, author of "Words That Win."
7. **Relate your success stories.** When someone asks what you do, respond with a problem you solved or results you achieved, not just your job title. For instance: "I'm the designer who created the backdrops and posters for Beyoncé's last concert tour." Not: "I'm creative director at ABC Graphics." "When others introduce you or talk about you, they often repeat what they have heard," says Peggy Klaus, author of "Brag!" "It's essential to have your 'bragalogues' ready — a short pitch about what you are doing that's interesting and memorable."
8. **Let others sing your praises.** If you get involved in a cause or community outreach or a professional group, associates will soon be talking up your virtues. The results can be both heartwarming and career building. "I've received awards and recognition in the press, and have caused others I've helped to send letters of thanks to my superiors," says Rita M. McConnell, media relations manager at Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, Pa.
9. **Finally, as Tom Peters says, "Re-imagine!"** The guru who gave us "In Search of Excellence" two decades ago is back with an updated message. In today's "Brand You" world, where you are your own brand, you must learn how to market yourself the way companies pitch their brands-by selling benefits, Peters says.

"To survive in today's labor market, or tomorrow's labor market, some form of energy, vitality, and entrepreneurial spirit is going to be a must," says Peters in his 2003 book, "Re-imagine! Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age." "If there is nothing very special about your work, no matter how hard you apply yourself you won't get noticed, and that increasingly means you won't get paid much either."

Business success grows out of developing passionate commitment or unparalleled excellence or consummate service — and then marketing that standout benefit so that everyone knows

your brand.

For more marketing and management advice, visit the Web site <http://www.muse2muse.com/m2m.html> for Joanna's company, Muse2Muse Productions.

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